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**HEALING GARDEN THERAPY: A PHENOMENOLOGY OF HOLISTIC HEALING FOR PATIENTS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Hospitalization is an unpleasant experience since it is associated with a frightening, stressful and anxious situation. The pain, uncertainty of the illness and treatment further provides stress to the patient. Healing Garden can help restore the patient's condition holistically. This study aimed to explore the lived experiences of the healing garden among patients of a private hospital in Indonesia. This study utilized descriptive phenomenology. Seven patients who were in the hospital and experienced the Healing Garden therapy were the participants of the study. In-depth interview using a semi-structured and open-ended guide was used. The interview was recorded, transcribed and analyzed using Colaizzi (1978). The data was validated by triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. This study revealed 5 themes that described the participant's experiences about Healing Garden therapy in Panti Rapih hospital: The participants lived experiences of the healing garden were organized into five themes 1) Healing Garden provides various patient experiences, 2) Healing Garden is an exciting event for the patients, 3) HG connects the patients like a family, a support, 4) Healing Garden therapies improved the patients' physical and psychological recovery, and 5) Healing Garden is an opportunity to be linked with spirituality. HG therapy performed at the Panti Rapih hospital provided a holistic impression for the patient. The recommendation of this study that HG program needs to be continuously socialized among the patients, families, and visitors.*

**Keywords:** *Healing Garden, Patients lived experience, Phenomenology.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Hospitalization brings about unknown experiences for the patients. Thus, the uncertainty can contribute to the stress that the patient has. Dijkstra (2009) stated that the physiological impact of the environment significantly influences the outcome of healing. Anxiety can suppress the patient's immunity and can inhibit the healing process. This condition will result in longer patient care time.

Hospital functions by providing comprehensive health care and to cure diseases (WHO, 2010). Based on Law Number 44 (2009), the hospital is a health care institution that provides full-scale personal health services for both inpatients and outpatients. One of the missions of a hospital is to provide quality health services that people can reach to improve their health status. They are expected to assist patients in improving their health and achieve healing about physical, psychological, social, and spiritual elements.

Watson (1985) defines health as a whole and harmonious condition between body, mind, and soul.

She states further that nursing is the application of art and human science through transpersonal caring transactions to help humans achieve harmony of mind, soul, and body that leads to self-knowledge, self-control, self-care, and self-healing. Jones (2003) likewise states that environmental factors play a prominent role in the human healing process, this is 40%, while the medical factor 10%, genetic factors 20% and other factors 30%.

One of the design concepts that put environmental factors in large portions is the existence of garden for healing (healing garden) is the association of the environment to the healing process. The application of environment-based healing or healing garden environment is a crucial factor to reduce the psychological stress and improve the healing process of the patient.

Healing Garden (HG) today is widely developed and researched on in several hospitals and health facilities that have green spaces. Healing garden specifically aims to improve health outcomes. Cooper Marcus and Barnes (2002), discussed that parks

or gardens provide shelter and promote healing in patients, families, and staff. The implementation of the concept of healing environment in the care environment will be seen in the final state of the patient's health, i.e. reduction of care time, reduction of medical expenses, pain reduction, stress reduction or feeling depressed, provision of positive mood, encouragement, and an increase of the patient's expectation of the environment (Dijkstra, 2009).

Fleming and Morisson (2002) revealed that the increasing number of gardens built in health facilities show a growing signal of interest in the healing garden. Research on evidence-based designs continues to reveal and validate health gardens that are capable of achieving specific health outcomes.

Also that a positive distraction an environmental feature or situation to promotes an improved emotional state in the perceiver, may block or reduce worrisome thoughts, and fosters beneficial changes in a physiological system such as lowered blood pressure and stress hormones (Ulrich, 1992).

In Indonesia, not all hospitals and health facilities are equipped with healing garden. Likewise, research related to the benefits of healing garden also has not been done. Panti Rapih Hospital, known as a "Garden Hospital," is a private hospital located in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and has implemented the healing garden program every Saturday for 2 hours since 2011. The activity is carried out by bringing patients to the open field with a beautiful garden. From there, patients are invited to listen to music and sing with other patients and hospital health workers. Moreover, patients are taught to do exercises and relaxation. The researcher is an observer of this practices got interested in the number of patients being involved in the activity. Thus this study explored the patient's experience after participating in the events of the healing garden at Panti Rapih Hospital, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This study explored the experience of patients after undergoing Healing Garden Therapy in hospital. Specifically, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the essence of the healing garden for the participants?
2. How does it contribute to their health or wellness?
3. What are the themes or sub-themes that emerge from the experiences of the participants?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study utilized the descriptive phenomenological approach that aims to explore one's experience, particularly after patients have undergone the activities of healing garden therapy.

### **Participants of the Study**

The participants in this study were seven patients who have undergone the activities of healing garden therapy at Panti Rapih Hospital. The general criteria were patients 1) who have experienced the events of healing garden therapy, 2) who have been at least in the hospital for two days, 3) who are at least 18 years old, and 4) who agree to participate in the study. Their ages ranged from 18 to 76 years. Among them, 29 were male, and 71 % were female. The educational background were 3 participants (42.8%) High School graduates, 2 participants (28, 6 %) Diploma III, and 2 participants (28,6 %) Scholars.

There is consist of 3 tribe: 1 participant (14.3%) Chinese, 1 participant (14,3%) Batak tribe, 5 participants (71,4%) Ethnic Javanese.

### **Instrumentation and Data Collection**

The in-depth interview was done using semi-structured questionnaire. Field notes were used to for bracketing and note taking. The interview has been recorded the researcher also observed the participants' for discomforts and anxiety. The researcher also triangulated the data shared by the participants by interviewing the head of the hospital's public relations and the nurse who contributed to the Healing Garden program.

In the data gathering process, the researcher was guided on how to do a research sensitively and considered ethical and methodological issues in the investigation. The researcher applied for the

approval of St. Paul University Philippines Ethics Review Committee. After which the researcher asked permission from the Hospital Director for the conduct of the study. Informed consent was secured from participants before interview. The researcher likewise negotiated with the hospital personnel as space in the hospital to conduct the research. The participants were made comfortable before the interview began. The interview lasted for at least 30 minutes to less than an hour. Upon data saturation, the researcher transcribed the interview and provided with data analysis. The data was tabulated and was translated into English.

### **Data Analysis**

To retell the story of the participants, the researcher transcribed the individual interviews. Each interview was interpreted using Colaizzi (1978), in Creswel (2014) method of narrative analysis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The participants lived experiences of the healing garden were organized into five themes 1) Healing Garden provides various patient experiences, 2) Healing Garden is an exciting event for the patients, 3) HG connects the patients like a family, support, 4) Healing Garden therapies improved the patients' physical and psychological recovery and 5) Healing Garden is an opportunity to be linked with spirituality.

Panti Rapih hospital, Indonesia is known as A Garden hospital because it has a beautiful garden. Every Saturday conducts Healing Garden therapy for treated patients, outpatients, and visitors. In general, patients feel happy during the HG therapy. Being in a beautiful garden, breathing clean air, enjoying the green of plants, hearing the sounds of birds, enjoying the beautiful fish running around the pond, listening to the music of the gurgling pool water, feeling the breeze of the wind that can refresh the mind, feeling and becoming relaxed that helps restore health. Opportunities to meet with fellow patients can strengthen each other and encourage one another. They get to know each other, share their experiences during illness. Feeling the same suffering can arise a new spirit to heal.

Here are the descriptions of the themes based

on participant expression related to his experience in Healing garden therapy.

### **HG provides various patient experiences**

Patients' opinions on Healing Garden therapy has provided a different understanding of the experience, and all are different and positive. The healing garden therapy has been described differently by the participants from spiritual, to social, to the perception of becoming healthy and happy, to just an appreciation of the garden.

HG is one of the ways of healing by collecting the patient's garden for spiritual therapy, refreshing the mind and increasing the motivation to heal in a comfortable and joyful situation. Here were the revelations from the participants:

"We gather this, maybe about spiritual healing yeah ..." (P1)

... "Very good. If I had seen this, togetherness with patients out there, in the garden "(P2)

... "A garden to recover..." (P3)

... "Garden to refresh our mind to make us happy again, and to be healthy again ..." (P4)

... "A packing event for gathering all patients, and a form of communication between the hospital and the patient ..." (P5)

... "An event to provide health motivation to become healthy ..." (P6)

..."Healing Garden should be a healing effort in a garden, garden is a garden, not a garden atmosphere in the true sense, but a garden that is a beautiful garden, a cool garden, a garden that gives the feeling of comfort. ..." (P7)

According to Vapaa (2002), the use of the word healing in the case of 'healing gardens' includes the understanding that it is not interpreted as a means or method of healing against a person, but the benefits are more related to helping to calm and restore one's mental and emotional health. Marcus and Barness (2002) state that Healing Garden comes, because the

gardens promote three functions, such are: 1) Relief from the symptom, 2) Reduction and 3) Improvement in the overall sense of well-being and hopefulness.

***HG is an exciting event for the patients***

Patients feel that following HG therapy is an exciting experience for patients because of the program's activities such as singing, meditating, praying, gymnastics for relaxation and also live music.

... "For me, I feel satisfied and happy with this Healing Garden event yeah ..." (P1)

... "I am delighted and happy to join the event) ..." (P2)

... "That was the first time I joined, quite fun .... the first impression, which I got is already positive, beautiful Garden, fish pond but no water fountain, nice bird sound ... natural ... the trees are green... Just the sound of the water gurgles soothes the soul ... "Lord ... this is your heaven" ... that's what makes me so impressed ... "(P3)

... "Interesting experience yes, there (in the garden)... invited to sing, the various treatments ... singing ..." (P4)

... "There is a live music ... which I don't mind any live music. ..." (P5)

... "Happy because together with other patients who support each other and strengthen ..." (P6)

... All in all, I say this ... "something," a very good program ... of course if Ma'am could ask all those present, they will say as what I say (while laughing) "... (P7)

***HG connects the patients like a family, support***

The participants gather together in an open garden, making them know each other, even as finding a new family, mutually motivating, encouraging and mutually reinforcing one another without distinction of race and religion. As in the following statements:

... "So, when we sang together I was touched, we

could gather together, we did not know each other. There can be togetherness between us (patient) regardless of religion or anything, so we feel like it's relieved, so it makes me touched (her voice is weak, her eyes are teary) ... "(P1)

... "I felt that it was so close to each other, I was first touched, I cried (while looking down). The togetherness of fellow patients out there in the park, some come with beds, some come with wheelchairs, but I see everyone is happy with the show ... "(P2)

... "A fun and memorable experience too, even though we are fellow patients were like family though not familiar so ... especially if we can support each other and strengthen. The mutual reinforcement is the most important ... "(P3)

... "I have met people may be sick as well, but they are passion ... also learn to feel light burden ..." (P4)

... "Togetherness with many patients it makes us ... mutually reinforcing as well ..." (P5)

... "So ... kind of spirit ... motivation to flourish and to be able to brighten the experience ... on friends who step on the age of adulthood to old ..." (P6)

... "I can meet many people who have the same problem, in different graduations ... (P7)

The same experience was conveyed by Wilihandarwo, (2016), as he saw that the meeting between patients is good, they talk and strengthen each other. Because of his experience, he created an android application called "pasienia " (Indonesia). The app has the purpose of facilitating communication between the patients.

***HG therapies improving physical and psychological recovery***

According to Stamatakis and Mitchell (2016), being with nature or even viewing scenes of nature reduced anger, fear, and stress and increased pleasant feelings. Also, the exposure to nature not only makes one feel better emotionally, but contributes to physical

wellbeing like reduce blood pressure, heart rate, and muscle tension.

The patient's experience is the same, after attending Healing Garden therapy, patients feel that their burden is reduced, both physically and psychologically. Physical and psychological improvement perceived by the patients following Healing Garden therapy is as described below:

... "I was a little dizzy yes, ho oh .. but in general yes there is a change towards the better ..." (P1)

... "Yesterday I felt chest pain, but this time I was told to a sport like this (while lifting his hands) ... I am not sick anymore ..." (P2)

... "It was still" painful, sometimes painful .... (while showing his pen-pinched hand), it was gone ... like hypnotized .... lost the pain ... "(P3)

... "There was back pain, dizziness and nausea ..... after Healing Garden therapy it was reduced ..." (P4)

... "Only the lower abdomen is still painful, there was really still a little pain ... but now it's fine ..." (P5)

... "There's new operation, before the healing garden I am not able to raise my hands, but now the pain has come down..." (P6)

Also, the patient also feels a psychological improvement, as revealed in the following statements:

... " Healing Garden therapy reduced the burden of my mind ... "(P1)

... "I feel healthier and feeling happier ..." (P2)

... " Healing Garden is very touching ... very personal ... A happy heart is a medicine ..." (P3)

... "It's still a lot of thought, but after following HG therapy ... the burden is lighter..." (P4)

... "I was so stressed that I had to be in the hospital and be separated from my child ... but after meeting with many patients in the HG, telling me about the

pain, I feel relieved ... not thinking about my pain .." (P5)

... "Days in the room, really unpleasant.." (P5)

Ulrich, (1999) also discussed that after a stressful event, images of nature very quickly produce a calming effect within three or four minutes after viewing nature scenes. The blood pressure, respiratory rate, brain activity and the production of stress hormone all decreased, and the mood improved.

#### ***HG is an opportunity to be linked with spirituality***

Jean Watson, 1988 said, that human consists of mind, body, and spirit. According to Puchalski (2011), spirituality is the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and to the sign of sacred, and that many practices recommended for cultivating spirituality are similar to those recommended for improving emotional wellbeing.

Base on the patient's experience, being in an open place (park) and with others who both suffer pain is a means of getting closer to God. They become more aware and accept that sickness is a gift from God. They believe that God will also provide healing. With illness, they have a chance to pray and contemplate their life. The following were the verbalizations :

... "That we are suffering ... get sick, and this illness comes from Allah, Inshallah .. Allah also will heal us..." (P7)

... "Sometimes we rejoice, we are grateful even in a state of grief also we must be able to accept and should be grateful ..." (P2)

... "I am really grateful that I am still healthy ... for me, I am in a healthy state compared to many people with such illness ..." (P5)

... "The joyful heart is an effective medicine" ... (P3)

... "Grateful .... There are still people who care about us ... .. accept ourselves as we are ..." (P6)

... "It is so comfortable; we do not think of such things as worldly, we are more into our souls, souls that need to be tranquil ..." (P6)

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The patients lived experience of Healing Garden therapy in Panti Rapih hospital is a holistic experience that made them realize that they are not alone with their problems. The experience provided the participants the opportunity to appreciate the experiences that they had, the people that they were with and the effort that was done by the hospital to give them a significant exposure.

Based on the results of research related to patient experience and patient input after following HG therapy, researcher's recommendation to improve the quality of HG program at the Panti Rapih hospital are:

For the administrator/hospital management, there should have been a guide the activity to make it easier for the implementation every Sunday

The Panti Rapih hospital (Public Relations) needs to socialize the HG program not only for the patient but also the families and visitors, so that many people may take advantage and benefit their health in this program.

For all health workers in the hospital, especially nurses to understand the benefit of HG for patients, so that it can be included in the nursing care of the patients.

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